



SEED GRANT GUIDELINES

The AYY Seed Grant is for funding up to \$50,000 to enhance existing partnerships between UMB and UCR researchers, emphasizing international, comparative, and bidirectional research. The Seed Grant requires a PI at both UMB and UCR, and funds must be disbursed to both institutions.

Seed Grants support researchers in developing and amplifying innovative projects within various domains of aging research, including clinical, psychosocial, behavioral, epidemiology, public health, and bench science areas. This could encompass a wide range of areas, from the biological processes of aging to the socio-cultural and psychological aspects of growing older, as well as policy implications. The grants should generate preliminary data or evidence of feasibility for larger studies and impactful publications. These awards may also facilitate the incorporation of community partner organizations into the research projects.

Timeline

April 1, 2024	Applications open
July 1, 2024	Deadline at 11:59 pm to submit Letter of Intent for Seed Grant OR complete Development Grant application
July 15, 2024	Applicants informed of funding decision or next steps If Seed Grant LOI is approved, UCR application process begins
January 1, 2025	Projected start of Seed Grant

Seed Funding Program Objectives



Overall Objective

- To foster innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration in aging research, thereby advancing the field's knowledge base and promoting the inclusion of diverse researchers.

Specific Objectives

- To stimulate the development of research collaborations between UMB and UCR, leveraging the unique strengths, resources, and perspectives of each institution to enhance the quality and impact of aging research.
- To broaden participation in aging research by encouraging applications from researchers of diverse backgrounds and varying levels of expertise, thereby enriching the field with a variety of perspectives and approaches.
- To support innovative research projects in aging that introduce novel concepts, challenge existing paradigms, or provide new insights into key aspects of aging.

Examples of Projects Appropriate for AYY Seed Grants

The following types of research projects are eligible for Seed Grant funding (not mutually exclusive):

- **Interdisciplinary collaborative projects:** projects that bring together researchers from different disciplines within UMB and UCR, focusing on innovative approaches to aging research. This could include collaborations between clinical researchers, social scientists, public health experts, and bench scientists.
- **Comparative and international research:** initiatives that leverage the unique policies and geographical and cultural contexts of the US and Costa Rica. Projects could focus on comparative studies of aging populations in both countries. For example, assessing differences/or similarities in aging processes, healthcare systems, health outcomes, and social support structures.
- **Community-engaged research:** proposals that involve community partners, such as nonprofits, advocacy groups, and public agencies, in the research process. This might include participatory research methodologies, where community members are actively involved in the design and implementation of the study.



- **Pilot studies for larger research initiatives:** pilot projects can help in testing new ideas, methods, or interventions in the field of aging and provide critical preliminary data for further funding.
- **Cross-cultural methodology development:** research focused on developing or refining methodologies that are sensitive to cultural differences, which can be used in international and comparative aging research.
- **Data sharing and integration projects:** proposals aimed at integrating or sharing data between UMB and UCR, to facilitate larger, more comprehensive studies on aging. This might involve harmonizing existing data sets or developing new tools for data collection and analysis.
- **Public health and epidemiological studies:** research that looks at the broader public health implications of aging, such as studies on the prevalence of age-related diseases, healthcare utilization among the elderly, or the impact of aging populations on health systems.
- **Behavioral and psychosocial research:** Studies examining the psychological, behavioral, and social aspects of aging. This could include research on mental health, cognitive function, social networks, and the impact of aging on quality of life.
- **Policy-oriented research:** projects aimed at informing policy decisions related to aging populations. This might involve analyzing existing policies or proposing new policy frameworks based on research findings.

Research Methodologies

Awardees may propose specific methodologies based on project characteristics. Researchers may utilize various methodological designs such as quantitative (cross-sectional or longitudinal), qualitative, case series, policy analysis, experimental, mixed methods, ethnographic and systematic reviews.

Priority Project Elements

In addition to considering the above-mentioned types of research projects, the Seed Grant reviewers will consider proposals that include:

- Facilitation of partner meetings
- Key partner identification
- Training and capacity building for community partners



- Training and capacity building for academic partners
- Addressing the needs of underserved populations

Seed Grant Budget Information

- The budget must be divided into costs allocated to UMB and costs allocated to UCR. Use of funds must comply with the regulations of the institution holding the funds.
- Up to \$50,000 for 12 months.
- No indirect costs are allowed at UMB, but UCR requires 5% overhead of the amount allocated to UCR.
- Salary support: Salary support may be included for UCR and UMB faculty-level members and research staff (no more than 30% of the total budget allocated among UCR and UMB faculty as agreed to by the applicants). Note: for UCR researchers, any amount in this category will be called "salary supplement" rather than "salary support".
- Allowable expenses: stipend for external contractors or community partners in Costa Rica or the US; travel costs to Costa Rica or US, lodging, catering, supplies, facility use fees, activity costs such as research training for partners, and other expenses required to develop the partnership.
- Unallowable expenses: tuition, purchase of office or laboratory furniture, phone services, and professional membership fees.

Restrictions for the Seed Grant

- The Seed Grant must be exhausted within 12 months of the award date. AYY leadership will meet with investigators throughout the project period to monitor progress. If a request for a no-cost extension has not been requested by the eighth month of the grant period, project activities will cease at the end of 12 months and any remaining funds will be returned to the AYY Initiative.
- Funds cannot be encumbered for future use or transferred to another project, researcher, or expense.
- Limited to one award per faculty per 12 months.



Eligibility

The eligibility criteria for the Seed Grant program differ between UMB and UCR. As such, prospective applicants are advised to carefully review and understand the distinct policies and guidelines set forth below.

Eligibility Criteria for UMB Faculty

- The PI needs to be Faculty at Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor level with a minimum 51% FTE appointment at one of the seven UMB schools, regardless of tenure track.
- Research Associates/Instructors, undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows are not eligible to apply and cannot be listed as co-PIs or co-investigators. However, they may be listed in other roles in the proposal.
- Adjunct or visiting faculty are not eligible to apply as investigators but may be listed in other roles in the proposal.
- Lead PI or Co-PI cannot serve on multiple applications in the same round.
- Applicants must have experience in aging research or have an interest – stated clearly in the proposal – for transitioning into aging research.
- Proficiency in Spanish is desired but not required.

Eligibility Criteria for UCR Faculty

- Must hold at least a half-time faculty appointment at UCR.
- Applicant's appointment status may be tenure-track, or interim with a continuous appointment.
- Must have participated in other UCR-sponsored projects (regular or competitive), at minimum as a Research Associate.
- Applicants must have experience in aging research or have an interest – stated clearly in the proposal – for venturing into aging research.
- All UCR researchers who are part of the proposal and have **other** projects, either as a principal investigator or collaborator, must be up to date with the submission of partial and final project reports to the Office of the Vice-Rector for Research



(Vicerrectoría de Investigación); otherwise, the project will not be accepted for evaluation.

IRB Determination and Approval

IRB determination, approval, and timing for the Seed Grant program differ between UMB and UCR. Investigators must ensure that all research activities adhere to IRB guidelines and other regulatory requirements at both institutions.

- **UMB:** IRB Letter of Determination/Approval is not required at the time of application but should be initiated upon approval of the Letter of Intent. The IRB designation must match the grant proposal, and the team list should be consistent. Additional institutional registrations/approvals must be obtained before initiating research activities.
- **UCR:** All research projects involving the interaction with humans or other living beings must be approved by the appropriate commissions, namely the Scientific Ethics Committee (CEC), the Institutional Commission on Biological Diversity (CBio), and the Institutional Commission on the Care and Use of Animals (CICUA). Approval by the appropriate commissions at UCR will take place when the Letter of Intent is approved and the UCR application commences. UCR researchers: Make sure you are inquiring with the Office of the Vice-Rector for Research (Vicerrectoría de Investigación) if you have doubts about timelines and processes for UCR IRB approval. Use [this form](#) to see if your project needs to be reviewed by one of these committees.

Consultation

Potential applicants are encouraged to meet with AYY leadership, prior to submission of an application to discuss seed funding proposals. A consultation can include identification of partners and projects as well as project design and plans for implementation. Please email [Michelle Sullivan](#) to arrange an in-person or virtual consultation.

Seed Grant Application Process

The Seed Grant application process includes two distinct stages: an initial stage coordinated by UMB, and a second stage conducted by UCR. The two-stage approach reflects the primary theme of the AYY Initiative – bidirectional learning and research equity – both of which necessitate meeting the project approval requirements of both institutions. Applicants



should be fully aware of the process and project approval requirements of both institutions to ensure potential projects are approved by UMB and UCR.

Two stage seed grant application process (deadlines for each cycle are on [website](#)):

1. Consultation with AYY Staff (optional but encouraged)
2. Submit Letter of Intent in English by deadline
3. Letter of intent reviewed, and applicants are notified within 2-3 weeks
4. Applicants with accepted LOIs move to stage two
5. UCR application started by UCR faculty member. It will take at least three months for application to move through the 4-stage process.
6. Specific agreement is created and signed by UCR legal representative.
7. Funds transferred, and grant term starts (at later of funding received and IRB approvals)

Application Process Stage One: UMB Letter of Intent

- Follow the template for the UMB Letter of Intent (LOI) on the AYY website.
- The LOI must be written in English.
- Maximum page length is four pages, typed double-spaced in Arial font 11.
- The LOI can be submitted by a PI from UMB or UCR. Co-Investigators are allowed.
- Regardless of who submits the LOI, it is the obligation of UCR researchers to submit the respective documentation to the Vice Rector's Office for Research to [Génesis Durán](#) or [Jorge Pérez](#).

Letter of Intent elements

Using the AYY application portal, all applicants will need to upload the LOI using the template provided on the AYY website, CVs or biosketches for all investigators, and general information (PI name(s), university affiliations, email addresses, and phone numbers). The LOI template includes the following elements:

- **Specific Aims:** State the goals of the proposed research and the expected outcomes.
- **Background:** Provide justification for the proposed research based on gaps in the literature and the need for the research being proposed.



- **Significance:**
 - What is your study's research question?
 - Describe how the proposed project will advance research in aging, including unique features, new collaborations, and innovation of the project.
- **Approach:** Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims.
- 1. **Study Design:** Briefly describe the study design
- 2. **Engagement Approach:** Briefly mention the plan to meaningfully engage partners/stakeholders during the study period
- 3. **Study Population and Setting:** Specify the study population and the settings
- 4. **Outcomes:** Describe the outcomes
- 5. **Analytic Plan:** Describe a priori specific plans for data analysis that correspond to major aims
- 6. **Sample Size and Power (if applicable):** Provide the total sample size for the proposed analyses
- **Study Timeline:** Delineate when project activities will be performed during the project period.
- **Budget** (not included in page limit).
- **Budget Justification** (not included in the page limit): Briefly describe the costs for both institutions and provide sufficient detail to explain the basis for costs, the reason why the costs are necessary to the project.
- **Multi PI Leadership Plan** (not included in page limit): Should (1) Describe the overall governance and organizational structure of the leadership team for the research project; (2) Delineate the administrative, technical, scientific, and engagement responsibilities for each PI; (3) Discuss communication plans and the process for making decisions on scientific and engagement direction; and (4) Describe the procedure for resolving conflicts.
- **References** (not included in page limit)

Letter of Intent Review Criteria

Letters of Intent (LOI) will be peer-reviewed, evaluated, and scored using the following criteria:



- **Relevance to AYY:** Is there a likelihood of the proposed project leading to a sustained research partnership between UMB and UCR? Are there clear plans to move the project through to the next step of funding?
- **Research Team and Environment** has the expertise to accomplish the goals of the proposed research project and the appropriate research environment to conduct the study. Is there evidence of success in previous research activities, grant awards, and publication history in the field of aging of at least one investigator? Are letters of support representative of strong collaborative intent?
- **Study Design and Methods (Scientific Merit)**
- **Scientific Impact** in the field of aging and gerontology, novelty, and merit
- **Feasibility** within defined budget period
- **Potential for Additional Funding** to further expand the research partnership and LOI endeavors.
- **MPI Leadership Plan** sufficient for conducting the project.

Application Process Stage Two: UCR Application

Once the Letter of Intent has been approved, the research team will move into Stage Two of the application process. Because this stage involves working closely with UCR academic and administrative offices and involves steps that are required for the UCR faculty member's participation in the project, the UCR faculty member will take the lead on this stage. PLEASE ANTICIPATE THAT THIS STAGE WILL TAKE AT LEAST 3-6 MONTHS TO COMPLETE. Applicants are responsible for moving the process along. Please contact the *Vicerectoría de Investigación* if there are any questions about this process.

The UCR Principal Investigator (PI) must formulate the project using the SIPPRES Project Formulation System and complete all sections. In addition, the following aspects should be considered:

1. The PI must have a teaching appointment of at least half time.
2. Their appointment status may be tenure-track or interim in a continuing appointment.
3. Executive Summary in Spanish must be added in the "Description" section of the SIPPRES format, with a maximum of 200 words.
4. The proposal must first be evaluated by the Scientific Council or Research Commission at SIGPRO. The proposal must include a copy of the documents of the session of the Research



Commission or Scientific Council where the proposal was definitively approved. This is an official requirement, so it must have the minimum requirements established according to current regulations of the University (autograph signature and seal of the Unit, according to resolution R -174-2020).

5. Without exception, all new proposals must be submitted electronically in their final version with the SIPPRES in "Approved" status.
6. Letter of presentation of the proposal duly signed by the director of the academic unit (see sample letter in Appendix 2).
7. Academic load forms of each of the participating UCR researchers with their respective signatures. The load form must be signed by the researcher, the director of the unit where the project is assigned, and the director of the researcher's base unit.
8. The participation of researchers from outside the University of Maryland, Baltimore and the University of Costa Rica requires a letter of collaboration signed by the immediate superior of the external collaborator, indicating the consent to collaborate and the functions to be performed within the framework of the proposal.

Additional consideration for Stage Two:

- **Disbursement of funds and final IRB determinations:** Upon approval from UCR, funds are disbursed to the successful applicants, and any final Institutional Review Board (IRB) determinations are received. This step involves the allocation of financial resources to the grant recipients and the completion of any necessary ethical review processes related to the research or project.
- **Grant term begins:** With the funds disbursed and all required approvals in place, the grant term officially begins. Grant recipients start implementing their projects or research activities according to the proposed timelines, milestones and objectives outlined in their applications. This marks the commencement of the work funded by the grant.